

SB 1339

Health Comm

March 4, 2007

Dear Legislators,

Please support the AED bill being considered for CT schools.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest can happen anytime, anywhere, and will occur more often during, or immediately after, exertion. People with undetected underlying heart problems appearing to be in excellent physical condition may be stricken with no warning. At least 350,000 people die each year from SCA. Thousands of adults and youths have died suddenly in physical education classes, soccer fields, in classrooms and locker-rooms, BB courts, school competitions, and pick-up games. These deaths CAN be prevented with greater awareness, a simple easy-to-use AED, and people trained in its use.

On Oct. 4, 2003, my 14 year old son Joseph DiPrete-DiGioia, became one of these sudden cardiac arrest victims. His high school athletic event had no AED. There were 600 runners, dozens of paid coaches, an AD, a full time AT, and race administrators, but no life-saving emergency AED. Joseph fainted while running, and died almost 2 hours later. Had there been an AED available and CPR/AED trained people, I have no doubt he would be here playing, studying, and enrolling for college today.

The delay of defibrillation reduces chances for survival 10% for every minute that passes after cardiac arrest. (The average response time for EMS is 8 minutes or longer). Survival of cardiac arrest victims is as high as 75% in places where public access to AEDs exists (compared to 5% survival with CPR, but no AED). That is a 1500% increase in survival rate.

Joseph had no known heart problem, no family history of cardiac arrest, and had no structural heart defect upon autopsy. He was a seasoned runner, having competed in state championships, appeared to be in the peak of good health and was in great athletic condition. He was surrounded by competent adults and coaches, but they were not prepared or equipped to keep my boy alive so he could get medical treatment.

We still do not know what went wrong with Joe's heart, but now know that there are 2 dozen cardiac abnormalities that can occur even in young people, that these can be detected and can be treated. We now know that an accessible AED and a written and communicated emergency protocol can save lives.

Parent Heart Watch is a national affiliation of parents of SCA victims, and of survivors who are the living vision of CPR and defibrillation. We speak for thousands of youth who have died suddenly and unexpectedly because they were not given that second chance in life.

Two weeks before he died, Joseph wrote that he enjoyed helping others when needed, and of his plans for working to improve human conditions. He did not get a chance to carry out his plans, but we can help in this way for other young lives.

States across the country are implementing AED and training programs, and are creating legislation for all schools to become equipped with what is now a standard for emergency response in public places.

Please do what is reasonable in today's safety and health concerns so others may continue to live. Help set this standard for CT and Southern New England,

With our thanks,

Sincerely,

Maura DiPrete (mother of Joseph)

Joseph Foundation [www.safeathletes.org](http://www.safeathletes.org)

Maine rep, Parent Heart Watch